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MONTEREY CYPRESS

M. D. BRAINARD

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By

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Monterey Cypress.

Within a radius of scarcely five miles together with an inland tension of only a few rods, there stands on Point Lobos and Cypress Point in Monterey County, California, a most interesting group of prehistoric trees widely known as the "Monterey Cypress," or, "Cedars of Lebanon." On the Points overlooking the Ocean the constant action of the fierce winds have forced a peculiar growth. Gnarled-trunked, some two to four feet in diameter, their limbs usually twist out from the bowl of the tree into long flat sprays which form table-like tops at the height of fifty feet from the ground. Other specimens, from the same cause, develop into grotesque shapes, the most spectacular being that of a striding ostrich and long-necked crane, weirdly silhouetted against the sky. Back from the granite shore, partially sheltered from Ocean winds, the trees produce a more open top while long straight branches extend down the less rugged bodies close to the ground. Inland, shut back by advancing Mon-



terey pines and entirely cut off from the ocean winds, the habit of growth is pyramidal.

The tree is a cypress and not a cedar. La Perouse discovered it in 1786, but, not until Hardweg rediscovered it in 1846 did it receive from him its first name, "*Cupressus Macrocarpa*," the Greek for "large fruited cypress." The flat-topped growth around Cypress Point bears so strong a resemblance to the Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus Libani*) that people non-versed in tree lore have naturally fallen into the error of using the misnomer. Writers, too, overshadowed by the wonderful stories told by the old stage-drivers of the Monterey Peninsula, constantly refer to the Monterey Cypress as the "sacred cedar of the Holy Land."

Alex. Early, a venerable driver for the Hotel Del Monte, was, in his time the favorite story-teller of the gullible globe trotter. The tree and sand dunes at Cypress Point on the "world famous" Seventeen Mile Drive, Alex. featured in marvelous story. He declared a wonderful race lived about the Point thousands of years bygone who planted seed brought by them from Syria, from which these "sacred trees of Lebanon" sprung; a white marble city with beautiful temples of worship buried under the sand dunes, he said, held the remains of the vanished race and its work.



Just where Alex. Early got his "folk lore" none can say. The facts of the tree-planting coupled with the founding of some temple of worship may have been transmitted through the aboriginal Indians, as was their custom from generation to generation, each generation removed, getting a little further from the truth until the story reaching the imaginative whites, lost its value for truth, under glamor and romance.

Most legends, or traditions and folk lore, be they Jew or Gentile, Christian or Savage, hide a truth. This story of Alex. Early very greatly modified and coupled with a sprig of the "*Cupressus Macrocarpa*" and its fruit, came through our search for further knowledge of the trees, to the notice of Dr. Mazziananda, Lord Abbot of the Golden Temple of India, while he was in charge of the Buddhist Educational Bureau of the P. P. I. E. in the Educational building during the Panama Pacific Industrial Exposition at San Francisco, in 1915.

Lord Abbot recognized in the story of the unknown birthplace of the original trees and their shrouded parentage, a thought worth considering. When we timidly suggested a likeness to the "Bo-tree," or, more properly the



“Bohidruma,” the “sacred tree of Buddha” under which he received the light—the question in point being with us, “how did these aliens get to Point Lobos,” the Doctor’s interest deepened. Quick of mind, this trained scholar with the occult eye of the Oriental scientist and naturalist began at once a systematic search and research to settle a question through records hitherto unknown, a question which of late years has involved a world-wide controversy.

Born in Ispahan, Persia, ninety-one years ago, Lord Abbot Mazziniananda is now the oldest monk living of the Jaina sect of Buddha. From Oxford, he received his B. A. M. A. M. D.; from Heidelberg, his Ph. D., to which Paris and London added M. A. M. D., and D. Lit. Author, orator and linguist of a score of tongues, through indefatigable research, Dr. Mazziniananda not only solved the world through his lectures delivered from his Bureau, using the discovered history and the connecting facts concerned, backed by statements recorded in documents still in existence.

His story we here embody in its fullest sense.

“In the year 420, A. D. five Chinese Buddhist monks from Gobina near Peking, China, set out on a journey to find



the where abouts of the 'Land of the Western Paradise' and to spread the teachings of the Enlightened Buddha on their way. On their arrival at the Coast, they constructed a small vessel in which they started on their voyage across the Pacific Ocean, as it is now called. They were well provisioned with food, and well supplied with Buddhist literature, statues of Buddha and rosaries. After what seems a happy, peaceful voyage, they reached the shores of what is now called California. Of course, this was nearly 1070 years before the discovery of America.

When these monks neared the shores of what is now called Monterey Bay, a storm arose and their little vessel was wrecked on the rocks, not far from what is now termed Point Lobos. They were fortunately washed ashore and after the storm had abated, they managed to get a goodly portion of their belongings ashore where having found a sheltered spot, they rested. Next day, in their quaint yellow robes, they searched around the place and accidentally came across some of the aborigines (an Indian tribe inhabiting that portion of the land) with whom they at once became friends on account of their peaceful nature; they were made welcome and proceeded at once to build a shelter for themselves and to instruct

and teach the Indians of the Love of God, the principles of agriculture and the elements of Education, etc. Having brought with them seedlings, cuttings, etc., of the Bodhi tree, and having a feeling that they had discovered the 'Land of the Western Paradise,' they planted these cuttings and nurtured them, and they grew rapidly so that the monks, owing to this, said, it must be the 'Buddha's land of the Western Paradise,' or the trees would not have grown.

Some five or six years later, about 427 A. D., two of the five monks started on a long journey southward and westward in a small vessel they had constructed, and eventually, they landed on the shores of what is now called Mexico, then, belonging to the Toltecs and Aztecs. There they found a high type of civilization and were again welcomed and stayed and taught and constructed temples and statuary, the remains of which are still standing. In Harper's Magazine for August, 1901 is given an account of some Buddhist Statues, etc., being unearthed in Mexico. These monks also planted some of these same trees as the sprig you so kindly sent me, so you see, that Monterey, California and vicinity, and the northwestern part of the interior of Mexico are the only two places in the Western Hemisphere where they are growing.



These two monks passed away there (in Mexico).

Coming back now to Monterey, we still find the other three monks. Of these, two took an affectionate farewell of their brother monk and their Indian friends and returned to China about 432 or 435 A. D., and were commanded by the then Buddhist Emperor Tsing Fo, of the Han Dynasty to write a *detailed account* of their discovery of the "Land of the Western Paradise." This account is preserved among the sacred and royal archives of China and Peking, and another at the "Gobina Buddhist Monastery."

The monk who remained at Monterey passed away there, presumably, at a ripe old age, having lived to see his work prosper and his sacred trees grow to massive giants.

So much, then, for the origin of the trees, a portion of the history of which I am indebted to the Very Reverend Ganeih Soto, Deputy Abbot of the Hongwaiyi.

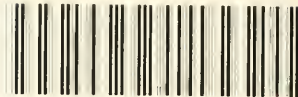
Now as to the connecting link I make—On the receipt of the sprig you so generously sent me by mail and which I placed by the Bhoda section I had brought with me, I instantly recognized the sprig, but after reading your accompanying letter to make doubly sure I was correct, although

I had no doubt in my own mind, I took the sprig to Mr. Hough, an authority on California trees and forestry, and later, with the help of Sister Julia Morrow, a most learned lady, we searched through volumes of books, lantern slides—plain and colored—until we at last found a colored view of the tree, and then referred to the Encyclopedia of wood and trees and found in it, to our joy, also mention of the Bohdi tree. We saw the tree was not aboriginal here, but had been imported some 1100 or 1500 years or so before. So through Sister Julia Morrow's aid (who was manager of an exhibit in the Palace of Education on the Floor, at the P. P. I. E.) in my research work, we established its identity.

Each time I spoke at the Exposition in the Exhibit on these trees I always told my auditors it was to you that I was deeply indebted. I still have and treasure the sprig you sent and my section of the Bodhi both of which I placed side by side on the Altar in the Exhibit. My brother priests in India, Ceylon, Thibet, Burmah, Siam, China, and Japan know it also, and thanked me for making the discovery known.

These trees should by all means be preserved on account of their historical value."

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